

Maheu Pledges Allegiance

When Suzanne Maheu, Homestay coordinator, Intercultural Center, JCCC, became a naturalized citizen on Feb. 29 in the

Robert Dole Courthouse, the federal courthouse in Kansas City, Kan., two officials from JCCC sat on the bench.

Attorney Anita Tebbe, professor and career program facilitator, paralegal program, the chair of the Naturalization Ceremony Committee for the Johnson County Bar Association, and JCCC president Dr. Terry Calaway, the ceremony speaker, sat on either side of the Honorable Dale Somers, the federal judge, who presided over the ceremony. Maheu, originally from Montreal, was one of 79 people from 25 countries who took the oath of allegiance that day to become a U.S. citizen.



"My husband, who is also a Canadian and seeking citizenship, was unable to attend the proceedings because he was out of town on business," Maheu said. "The presence of Dr. Calaway and Professor Tebbe at the proceedings squelched the feelings of disappointment I was feeling from knowing that I would not have a loved one in attendance to observe this meaningful ceremony that marked a very significant event in my life."

Maheu's husband, Neale Lobo, took a job as an engineer with Hoechst Marion Roussel (now known as Sanofi-Aventis) in Kansas City, Mo., June 5, 1997. Maheu had two daughters, 3 and 5, at the time and later had a third child. Because of the educational and support services provided in Johnson County to her oldest daughter, who is intellectually-challenged, the Maheu-Lobos decided to seek permanent citizenship.

"We thought our daughter could reach her greatest potential here," Maheu said.

Maheu, who has a bachelor's degree in psychology from McGill University, Montreal, and a master's degree in psychology from the University of Guelph, Ontario, worked for 10 years in

Montreal in psychogeriatrics as part of a multidisciplinary team assessing dementia.

At JCCC, she coordinates homestays for international credit students. Her own experience as an immigrant adds to her appreciation of JCCC international students who, she says, "have the courage and confidence to live in a foreign country and learn about another culture and language."

Calaway welcomed the new citizens and recognized that their abilities would enrich this country. He also talked about his in-laws, naturalized citizens, and how much U.S. citizenship meant to them.

"The naturalization proceedings are incredibly moving," said Tebbe, who was appointed to her position by the president of the Johnson County Bar Association to organize proceedings every other month (the Johnson County Bar Association alternates monthly with the Wyandotte County Bar Association). "It's a very powerful oath in which one renounces one's country of birth. It is a huge step for immigrants."

Maheu says that Canada allows its citizens to hold dual citizenship. 🌿

Staff

Anita Tebbe (left) and Dr. Terry A. Calaway (right) officiated at the naturalization ceremony of Suzanne Maheu.